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ABSTRACT

Quality physical education programs taught by well-trained physical education specialists are an integral part of the total education of a child. This Digest describes the history and development of national standards for physical education by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE). In 1995, NASPE published a general description of content standards by grade level and a variety of techniques appropriate for assessing student achievement. The National Standards for Physical Education indicate that a physically educated student: (1) demonstrates competency in many movement forms and proficiency in a few; (2) applies involvement concepts and principles to the learning and development of motor skills; (3) exhibits a physically active lifestyle; (4) achieves and maintains a health-enhancing level of physical fitness; (5) demonstrates responsible personal and social behavior in physical activity settings; (6) demonstrates understanding and respect for differences among people in physical activity settings; and (7) understands that physical activity provides opportunities for enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and social interaction. To achieve these standards a quality physical education program focuses on health-related fitness and behavioral competencies and motor skills needed for lifelong engagement in healthy and satisfying physical activity. Implications for instruction and program support are indicated. (Contains 14 references.) (LL)

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NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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by

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National Standards for Physical Education

Judith C. Young

Why Should Physical Education be Taught in the Schools?

Physical education is an integral part of the total education of the child and virtually every state, district, and school in the United States requires physical education for its students (Pate et al., 1995). Quality physical education programs are needed to increase the physical competence, health-related fitness, self-esteem, and enjoyment of physical activity for all students so that they can be physically active for a lifetime (Seefeldt & Vogel, 1986). Knowing that physical activity promotes health is not enough: students must be given opportunities to gain the knowledge and skills needed to adopt active lifestyles.

Physical education teaches students how to add the habit of physical activity into their daily lives by aligning instruction with the National Standards for Physical Education, and by providing content and learning experiences that develop the skills and desire to be active for life.

Values of Physical Activity

Physical activity improves muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and cardiovascular endurance, as well as serves as a vehicle that helps children establish self-esteem and strive for achievable, personal goals. The Surgeon General's report, *Physical Activity and Health* (1996) concludes that regular moderate physical activity can substantially reduce the risk of developing or dying from heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer, and high blood pressure. The American Heart Association (1995) recommends that all children aged 5 years or older should engage in at least 30 minutes of daily physical activity at a moderate intensity and vigorous physical activity for 30 minutes at least 3 days per week.

Acknowledgement of the contributions of school physical education to health led to the inclusion of two national objectives that are related to school physical education in *Healthy People 2000*, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' national health objectives (1990):

Objective 1.8 Increase to at least 50% the proportion of children and adolescents in grades 1-12 who participate in daily school physical education.

Objective 1.9 Increase to at least 50% the proportion of school physical education class time that students spend being physically active, preferably engaged in lifetime physical activities.

The Surgeon General's report calls school-based physical education "the most widely available resource for promoting physical activity among young people in the United States" (Physical activity and health, 1996; p. 237), and recommends that "every effort should be made to encourage schools to require daily physical education in each grade and to promote physical activities that can be enjoyed throughout life" (p. 6).

National Standards for Physical Education

In 1986, the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) appointed its Outcomes Committee to answer the question, "What should physically educated students know and be able to do?" The result of the Outcomes Project was a definition that includes five major focus areas, specifying that a physically educated person:

- has learned skills necessary to perform a variety of physical activities,
- is physically fit,
- participates regularly in physical activity,
- knows the implications of and the benefits from involvement in physical activities,
- values physical activity and its contribution to a healthful lifestyle (National Association for Sport and Physical Education [NASPE], 1995a).

Following the work of the Outcomes Committee, a Standards and Assessment Task Force was appointed to develop content standards and assessment material based on the previous work. The standards document developed by this group had the following purposes:

- to establish content standards for the physical education school program that clearly identify consensus statements related to what a student should know and be able to do as a result of a quality physical education program; and
- to establish teacher-friendly guidelines for assessment of the content standards that are consistent with instructionally integrated orientations toward the role of assessment in teaching and learning.

In *Moving into the Future: National Standards for Physical Education, A Guide to Content and Assessment* (NASPE, 1995a), a general description of each content standard is first presented, followed by presentation of the standards according to grade level: K, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12. Within each grade level, the standard is further defined, followed by a listing of the key points of emphasis for that grade level. Sample performance benchmarks, which describe developmentally appropriate behaviors representative of progress toward achieving the standard, are also presented. Lastly, a variety of assessment techniques appropriate for assessing student achievement of the specified content standard is described.

The National Standards for Physical Education indicate that a physically educated student:

1. Demonstrates competency in many movement forms and proficiency in a few movement forms.
2. Applies involvement concepts and principles to the learning and development of motor skills.
3. Exhibits a physically active lifestyle.
4. Achieves and maintains a health-enhancing level of physical fitness.

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5. Demonstrates responsible personal and social behavior in physical activity settings.
6. Demonstrates understanding and respect for differences among people in physical activity settings.
7. Understands that physical activity provides opportunities for enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and social interaction.

Since 1850, when the first physical training of students in schools began, the emphasis of school physical education has expanded from physical training and calisthenics to performance-related fitness and the development of competitive sports skills. Today the focus of contemporary physical education is on health-related fitness and the behavioral competencies and motor skills needed for lifelong engagement in healthy and satisfying physical activity.

A quality physical education curriculum includes:

- mastery of basic skills and understanding of motor skills related to a variety of physical activities so that each individual can make positive decisions about physical activity choices;
- experiences that encourage children to question, integrate, analyze, communicate, and apply cognitive concepts about motor skill and physical activity;
- opportunities to improve social and cooperative skills, and gain a respect and appreciation for diversity; and
- use of fitness education and assessment to help children understand, enjoy, improve, and/or maintain their physical health and well-being.

Implications for Instruction and Program Support

To maximize the opportunities to learn in physical education, a range of factors must be available. These include time in the schedule, reasonable class size, adequate facilities and equipment, a well-planned curriculum, appropriate assessment procedures, qualified teachers, and positive administrative support (NASPE, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c, 1994a, 1994b, 1995b, 1996).

In the continuing quest to make physical education experiences more personally relevant to children and youth, new developments in learning theories, structuring of subject matter, and new perceptions concerning growth and development must be continuously considered, evaluated, and implemented. The teacher plays the central role in the success of a physical education program and priority must be given to employing qualified elementary, middle, and secondary school physical education teachers to maximize student learning and achievement.

Quality physical education is both developmentally and instructionally appropriate for the specific children being served. Instructionally appropriate physical education incorporates the best known practices, derived from research and experiences in teaching children, into a program that maximizes opportunities for learning and success for all.

Students should also use technology in today's physical education classes to explore fitness and motor skill concepts in ways that personalize the curriculum more than ever before. Heart rate monitors, video and digital photography, computer software, and equipment to measure body composition are a few of the tools made possible by technology.

Teacher preparation is critical to successful school physical education programs. NASPE standards for beginning physical education teachers (1995c) outline standards in nine areas: content knowledge, growth and development, diverse learners, management and motivation, communication, planning and instruction, learner assessment, reflection, and collaboration. These standards provide the basis for guidelines for professional preparation of physical education teachers who have sound knowledge and understanding of kinesiology (the content of physical education) and are also knowledgeable and skillful in the pedagogy that is needed to transmit this knowledge to students.

Conclusion

Quality physical education programs taught by well-trained physical education specialists play a significant role in promoting the health of children and, ultimately, adults. The National Physical Education Standards provide a framework for structuring programs that will develop physically educated children to help the nation to reach its health goals for children and adults.

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References identified with an EJ or ED number have been abstracted and are in the ERIC database. Journal articles (EJ) should be available at most research libraries; most documents (ED) are available in microfiche collections at more than 900 locations. Documents can also be ordered through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service: (800)443-ERIC.

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